Indian Coastal Waters Grave-Yards for Old Ships

*140.SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO:
SHRI C.RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether coastal waters and ports in India have become graveyards for old ships as reported in the Asian Age dated the 7th September, 1998.

(b) the action proposed to fix responsibility on owners to remove wreckage of vessels; and

(c) the steps proposed to empower Coast Guard to check sea-worthiness of ships operating in Indian Waters?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI M.THAMBI DURAI): (a) It is not correct to say that the coastal waters and ports in India have become graveyards for old ships.

(b) While action to fix responsibility on owners of sunken vessels in the port Limits is taken under the Major Port Trusts Act which expressly provides that the responsibility of removal of wreck rests on the owners of the ship, responsibility of removal of wreck occurring outside port limits but in India's territoriat waters, has not been expressly imposed on the ship owners under the existing porvisions of the Merchant Shipping Act.

Action has already been initiated to amend the relevant provisions of the Act.

(c) There is no proposal to empower Coast Guard to check Sea-worthiness of ships operating in Indian Waters.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Amount spent by AI on public relations

931. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:
SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India has been suffering loss as shown in the results of first half of the current year;

(b) the amount of loss likely to be at the end of the year;

(c) the cumulative losses incurred by Air India;

(d) the amount spent by Air India on public relations during the last year;

(e) the justification in spending large sums on public relations; and

(f) the steps being taken to improve financial condition of Air India?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The budgeted loss for 1998-99 is estimated to be Rs.340.72 crores.

(c) The cumulative loss of Air India upto 31st March, 1998 is Rs.749.79 crores.

(d) and (e) The amount spent by Air India on publicity and sales promotion during the year 1997-98 was Rs.21.02 crores. The amount was spent mainly on advertising campaign on image development of the company.

(f) Air India Limited has taken the following steps to improve the financial performance:—

(i) Marketing efforts have been stepped up to generate additional revenue.

(ii) Network rationalization and consolidation with emphasis placed on route profitability.

(iii) Reduction in expenditure on outside repairs of aircraft by undertaking more in-house repairs.

(iv) Several posts of India based officers abroad have been abolished.

The Government has constituted a Committee of experts under the Chairmanship of Dr.Vijay Kelkar, at present Finance Secretary, Government of India to undertake a comprehensive examination of the reason for the losses incurred by the Air India and to suggest strategies for turning around the company.

The Disinvestment Commission in its VIII Report on Air India interalia has recommended infusion of Government equity of Rs.1000 crores and induction of a strategic partner on the basis of global bids. The recommendations of the Commission are under consideration of the Government.

Upgradation of Amritsar Airport

932. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
SHRI GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the State Government of Punjab has acquired and handed over to the Airport Authority of India, land for the extension of the runway and terminal buildings for upgrading the existing Amritsar Airport to International standards;

(b) whether the work on this project has been started:

(c) the amount spent in this regard so far; and

(d) by when the work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has prepared a feasibility report, for developing Amritsar airport to International standards which is under consideration of the Government.

Average yield of Indian Airlines

933. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Airlines yield per kilometer is 50% higher than many international airline; if so, the details of yield of different International airlines including Indian Airlines and Air India; and

(b) whether Government plan to make Indian Airlines more viable in the interest of the travelling public?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The following steps have been taken to make Indian Airlines more viable in the interest of the travelling public:

(i) Increased utilisation of Aircraft through:
— Increased productivity of Commanders.
— Increased availability of Commanders.
— Increased aircraft per day as a result of increased productivity of engineers.
— Launching of Alliance Air.
(ii) Attracting passengers by:
— Product improvement.
—Innovative and aggressive marketing strategies.
—Improved on-time performance.
—Dissemination of information about strength of the company.
—Attention towards safety of aircraft as well as passengers.

Financial performance of Air India

934. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India's performance during the recent years has been quite dismal; if so, the details of financial performance during the last two years and the loss Air India is likely to incur during the current financial year;

(b) whether Air India has sought a bailout package from Government to save it from total collapse;

(c) if so, the details of such package;

(d) the precise reason for Air India's failure in recent past and the steps taken by management to improve its performance; and

(e) the action Government have taken on the package submitted to it by Air India?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (e) The details of losses incurred by